

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL
Division of Operations-Management

MEMORANDUM OM 95-79

October 18, 1995

TO: All Regional Directors, Officers-in-Charge,
and Resident Officers

FROM: B. Allan Benson, Acting Associate General Counsel

SUBJECT: Travel Reduction Measures

Due to the severe budgetary constraints under which we must operate during the Continuing Resolution, and likely thereafter, it is imperative that each of us conserve our scarce resources and operate as efficiently as possible. Travel is one of the most significant cost areas in the field and it is crucial that it be carefully monitored, particularly during the next 6 weeks. In this regard, travel must be coordinated on a daily basis by the Region's travel coordinator. We understand that you are already utilizing cost-savings techniques but our budget through November 13, 1995 mandates that travel be restricted to the maximum extent practicable. During this period of restricted budgets, we need to ensure that these resources are carefully managed and allocated. Accordingly, all Regions are to implement the following measures if not already in place. The priorities for travel will be for R case hearings, elections, trials, statutory priority cases and Category III cases.

Investigations

In making decisions as to where to expend resources please be guided by the Impact Analysis Model. For investigative purposes, travel funds should be used on Category III cases first.

The techniques set forth in the Lightening the Regional Office Workload memorandum (GC 95-15) must be liberally utilized. The use of questionnaires, telephonic affidavits and charging party statements, particularly in Category I and in some Category II cases should preclude the necessity for travel to meet with charging parties and their witnesses.

In those cases where face-to-face interviews are necessary, parties and witnesses within a 120-mile radius of the Regional Office should be told that it is their obligation to travel to the metropolitan area surrounding the Regional Office. If they cannot do so, serious consideration should be given to handling the case telephonically. In the alternative, parties must be advised that failure to come

into the office may result in substantial delay in the processing of their cases due to the need to cluster cases as a result of budgetary constraints.¹ The 120-mile rule should generally be invoked for all hearings except ULP case hearings where witness fee costs will outweigh the costs of Board agent travel or R case hearings where only minimal costs are involved and the Region determines that an on-site hearing is necessary to ensure a complete record. With regard to investigations in locations beyond 120 miles from the Regional Office, parties and witnesses are to be encouraged to cooperate in our cost reduction efforts and voluntarily travel to the Regional Office city or to a mid-point location for purposes of hearings or providing affidavits. At the very least, in distances beyond 120 miles, Board agents should encourage parties and witnesses to meet in a central location to minimize the costs of travel as well as the Board agent's time on the road.

In investigations where it is determined that contact with the charged party is necessary,² charged parties sometimes refuse to give affidavits but agree to allow their witnesses to be interviewed. While we understand that there may be circumstances where it is necessary to proceed with such an interview, such as to review necessary records, generally, in this situation, travel to the charged party's location when it is outside the Regional Office city should be avoided. Alternative routes of inquiry would include conducting the interview by telephone, or simply telling the charged party to provide a position statement or responses to specific questions. As always, charged parties should be informed in writing that a refusal to provide witness affidavits is not "full cooperation" in the investigation. (See OM 89-5 and 89-16).

If you do not have a travel coordinator at the present time, one should be appointed immediately. The travel coordinator must be aware of the travel funds available and identify those cities and locations within the Region where clustering of cases or multiple assignments are possible. In making travel assignments, attention should be given to elections, trials and R case hearings which are already scheduled so that investigations or parts thereof occurring in those areas can be assigned to the professionals handling those elections, R case hearings or trials. Board agents planning travel must secure approval of the travel coordinator prior to commencing a trip.

In this budgetary situation where travel funds are so severely limited, air travel should only be authorized if it saves money and time and is the most efficient means of travel.

Interregional cooperation and communication need to be maximized. In situations where a Board agent will be in a location that is contiguous with

¹ This does not preclude Regional travel in and around the metropolitan area surrounding the Regional Office when such travel is cost efficient.

² See CHM 10056.5.

another Region, the Region sending the Board agent should contact the other Region to inquire as to whether there is work that could be completed for the other Region by the Board agent while in the area. In these situations the NLRBU should be informed through the District Vice-President for bargaining and/or consultation as appropriate. To facilitate this process each Region is to submit the name and phone number of its travel coordinator to Joyce Van Horn within the next few days and we will distribute the list fieldwide for your use.

Work in the area of Board agents' homes should be assigned, wherever possible, to those living nearest the work, in order to avoid unnecessary travel.

Administrative Travel

All administrative travel is suspended. Please cancel all recruiting activities and speaking engagements including FEB and bar meetings except where no travel costs are involved.

Government Furnished Vehicles (GFV)

A substantial amount of our field travel is accomplished through use of government furnished vehicles, specifically GSA-provided automobiles. In August 1995, our 114 GFV cars were driven 85,814 miles at a cost to the Agency of \$34,114 or \$0.40 per mile, excluding maintenance and repair charges. In our view we should strive to operate our fleet at less than the \$0.30 per mile rate paid to employees operating their private vehicles for use on Agency business. In August, only 49 of our 114 cars were used to the extent that the cost was less than \$0.30 per mile. Accordingly, all offices should reassess their coordination of GFV car usage and determine whether they have more cars than are needed and how to maximize GFV usage.³ Factors to consider include: the number of commitments from employees to use GFVs;⁴ the average number of days per month that each GFV car is used; the cost of using a commercial rental car in place of a permanently assigned GFV car; the willingness of employees who have committed to using their own private vehicles to using a GFV car instead.⁵ In assessing how to maximize usage, be mindful that in accordance with other provisions of this memo all automobile field travel should be reduced in the future. In reviewing the question whether there are more GFV cars assigned to

³ Generally, the per mile cost becomes less than \$0.30 per mile when each car is driven more than 700 miles per month and 1250 miles per month for each 4-wheel drive vehicle. The cost of garaging vehicles affects this cost efficiency point. The point is higher if the monthly cost of garaging the car is more than \$100 and lower if the cost is less than \$100.

⁴ See Article 29 of the Collective-Bargaining Agreement.

⁵ While we cannot force any employee to change their commitment, we and the NLRBU encourage them, as a cost-saving measure, to use a vehicle that would be more cost efficient.

the Region than needed, consult the local union. In the event you determine that one or more GFV cars should be returned to GSA, be sure the Finance Branch is aware that the size of your fleet has changed. Finally, you should note that when any GFV car is returned, its parking space should be eliminated also. Commercial car rental is not to be authorized unless there is no GFV available and it is the most cost efficient means of necessary travel.

We recognize that some of these restrictions regrettably will create some hardship for the public and employees. However, we believe these measures will continue to be necessary under even a minimal reduction of funding. If you have any ideas or recommendations for further reductions of travel and/or travel costs, please contact your Assistant General Counsel.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and efforts in this challenging time.

B. A. B.

cc: NLRBU

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